

# **Exhibit 31**



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# **It's A Business Model: Why College Admissions Decisions Are So Hard To Predict**

**Marilee Jones**

**April 12, 2013**



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## **In Preface...**

- **There are no villains.**
- **Everyone is doing the best they can.**
- **But it is time for a re-think.**
- **We can lead.**



# **Number of U.S. Colleges**

- **1845 private 4 yr colleges/596+ 2 yrs**
- **629 public 4 yr colleges/1070+ 2 yrs**
- **2474 total 4 yr colleges**
- **4140 total 4yr + 2yr colleges**
- **Plus MOOCs and for-profit schools**



# **Private vs Public Universities**

- **Have different funding models**
- **Have different mandates**
- **Have different admissions policies and procedures**



# **Public Universities**

- **Funded by state taxpayers**
- **Policies are created or overseen by state legislatures/governor**
- **Admissions policies are (mostly)transparent**
- **Bound by laws**



# **Private Universities**

- **Funding sources are diverse, gov't and private**
- **Each school has a different mandate/mission**
- **Admissions policies are arcane**



## **How Private Colleges Admit**

- **Cases read/scored/summarized at least 2x**
- **Some cases triaged out at first read**
- **Committee discussion/decision with all documents present**
- **Institutional needs addressed**
- **School check**





# **Who Admits? (in order of importance...)**

- **Admissions counselors (new graduates)**
- **Assistant Directors (junior staff)**
- **Associate Directors (senior staff)**
- **Dean/Director**
- **Faculty/staff**

# Facts About College Selectivity

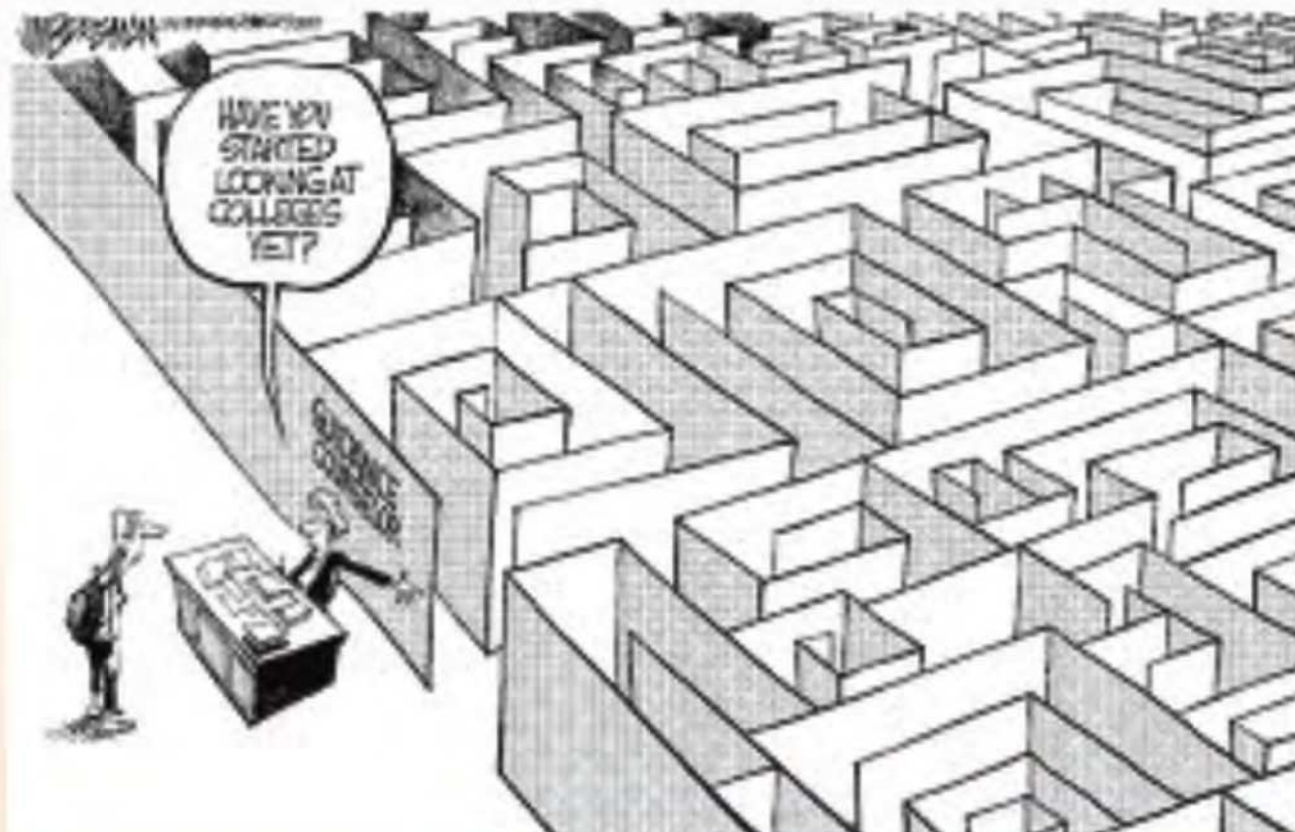
- **4%** of four yr colleges (100) are considered to be “**selective**”: admit rate<50%, yield>40%
- **2%** of four yr colleges (50) are considered to be “**highly selective**”: admit rate<20%, yield>50%
- **99%** of college admissions stories in the media refer to the **4% most selective colleges**



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**The goal of college admissions is  
to find an authentic match  
between an applicant and a  
college.**

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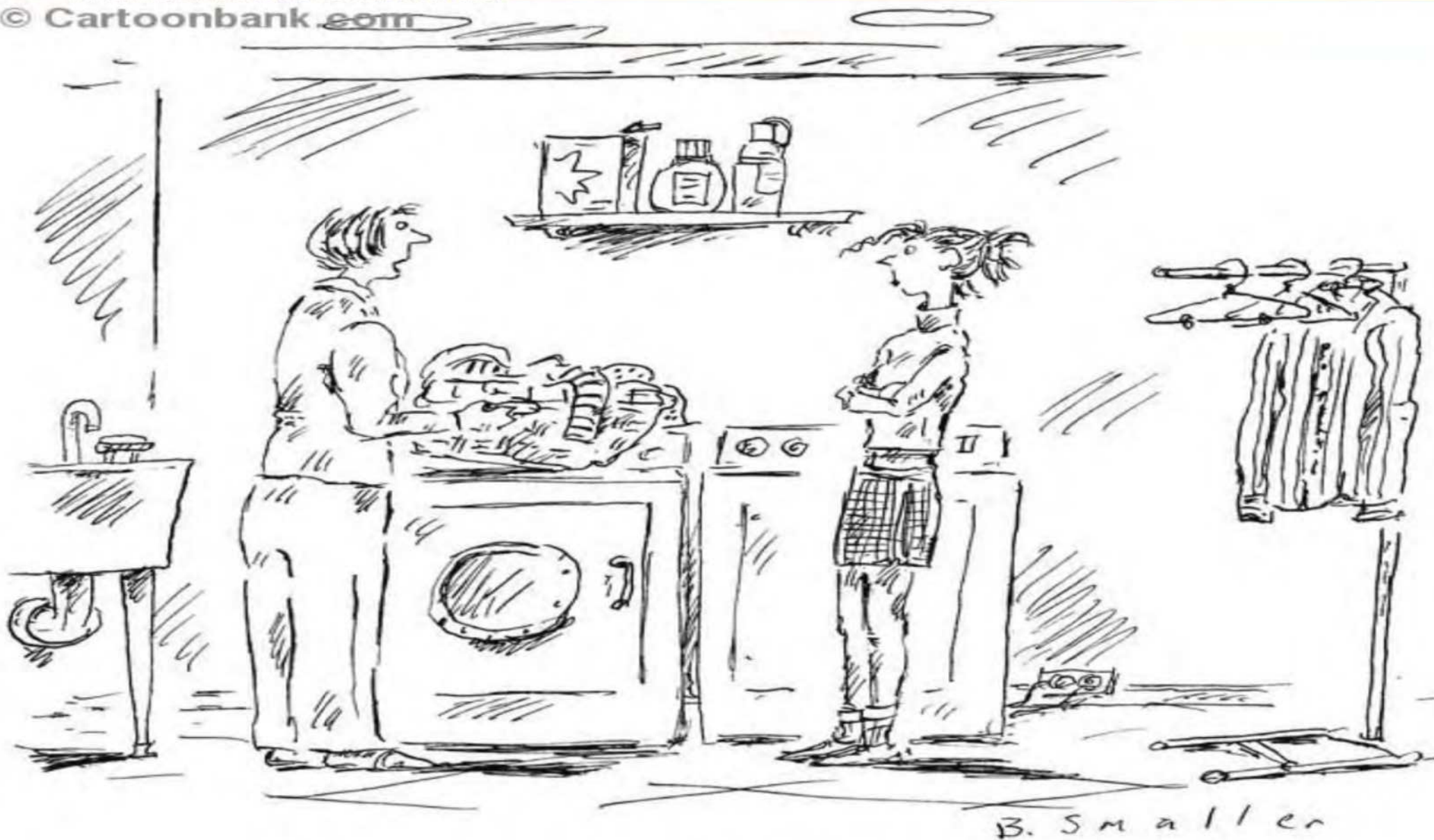


# Why is College Admissions so Stressful?

1. **Demographics – more students applying (average applicant pool has doubled since 2006)**
2. **Ease of applying = more students applying to more colleges- 12 applications on average now vs 6 a decade ago**
3. **Rankings create illusion of distinction (USNWR etc)**
4. **Media hype, scary facts without context**
5. **Generational differences**
6. **Big disconnect between student/parental expectations and actual college admissions policies**

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*"We want you to have fun, as long as it's fun that enhances a college-admission application."*

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Now:

Case: 1:22-cv-00125 Document #: 706-12 Filed: 06/03/24 Page 15 of 50 PageID #:16120

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# **The Big Disconnect Between Family Expectations and College Procedures:**

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# **Education Model:**

## **Thanks, B. Alden (BAT) Thresher**

- **Father of private college admissions**
- **Wrote seminal piece, College Admissions and the Public Interest 1966**
- **Advocated for meritocracy vs aristocracy in admissions in order to build a solid, peaceful middle-class and to create a nation of knowledgeable citizens**

# **Education Model**

- **Considers the needs of 3 generations ahead**
- **Asks the question, “what does the nation/world need going forward?”**
- **Coordinates with government and communities (town/gown)**
- **Is a practice in meritocracy**
- **Dedicated to fairness and long-term peace**



# When Did Things Begin To Change?

- **Started in the recession and demographic dip of the 1980s**
- **Outsourcing to accommodate shrinking budgets**
- **Overlap decision- 1993 (no more collaboration)**
- **Enrollment management techniques**
- **Generational change (WW2 gen to Baby Boomers, now to Gen-Xers)**
- **Technology and data mining**



# **Business Model**

- **Focuses on that school's needs that year**
- **Focuses on beating the immediate competition**
- **Offers little sense of 'fairness' to the outside world but makes sense internally (insularity)**
- **Goes unexplained**
- **End goal is a higher ranking in USNWR to ensure future success**

# College Admissions Business Model Formula

- **high application #s + low admit rate + high yield =  
higher ranking on USNWR =  
more apps + bragging rights =  
more alumni donations + better faculty =  
higher application #s =**

- **Increasing applications is the most important thing, so recruitment material is strategically seductive. Colleges then make it very easy for candidates to apply (Fast Apps, Common App).**



# What Most Parents Expect


- **Colleges are selecting for educational reasons and that academic numbers (SATs, grades, rank) mean something.**
- **Colleges are reaching out to their child because those schools recognize their child's intrinsic value.**
- **Colleges mean what they say and have a sense of fairness.**



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# **How Are Parents Choosing Colleges?**

- **Reputation**
- **Advice from friends and family, IECs**
- **Hearsay**
- **Media information**
- **Info from back-in-the-day**
- **Geographical location**
- **etc**

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# How are Parents Choosing?



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# **How Are Colleges Choosing?**

- **Selecting applicants who fit the school's culture**
- **Winning/gaining against their competition**
- **Satisfying “institutional needs” (and therein lies the rub...)**

# **What Are “Institutional Needs”, the Critical Factor?**

- **Creating ‘diversity’ and financial stability within the school’s cultural context by assuring that certain populations are admitted and enrolled.**
- **These needs are unique to each college and are not communicated to the public. They can change yearly and/or with each leadership change.**

# **Examples of Institutional Needs**

- **Division 1 athletes**
- **Children of major donors**
- **Children of celebrity**
- **Children of prominent alumni**
- **National representation (best in state vs best anywhere)**
- **Ethnic/racial/gender diversity**
- **Diversity by major (civil eng. vs electrical eng)**
- **Diversity by extra-curricular involvements (tuba)**
- **No-need candidates**
- **Etc etc etc**

# USNWR Algorithm

- In 2012, had 16 aspects in 7 major areas
- 4 of the 16 aspects were owned by the Admissions Office.
- Morse changes the weighting in these aspects from year to year to ensure a changing result. (creates drama, sells magazines)
- Says more about who is entering than what happens while enrolled. There is no evidence of quality of education.
- Can be manipulated and is manipulated by colleges.



# USNWR Algorithm- General Areas

- **Undergraduate Academic Reputation (2 aspects)**
- **Student Selectivity for the Previous Entering Class (4 aspects)**
- **Faculty resources for the Previous Year (6 aspects)**
- **Graduation and Retention Rates (2 aspects)**
- **Financial Resources (1 aspect)**
- **Alumni Giving (1 aspect)**

# **USNWR Algorithm – Student Selectivity Aspects**

- **Acceptance rate**
- **High school class standing in top 10%**
- **High school class standing in top 25%**
- **Critical reading and math portions of the SAT  
and the composite ACT scores**

## **USNWR Algorithm – Other Aspects**

- **Peer assessment survey**
- **High school GC ratings**
- **Faculty compensation**
- **% faculty with top terminal degree in their field**
- **% full-time faculty**
- **Student/faculty ratio**
- **Class size (1-19, 50+)**
- **Average graduation rate**
- **Average freshman retention rate**
- **Financial resources/student**
- **Average alumni giving rate**

# What Do Admissions Offices Do Poorly?

- **Share info about their school's culture**
- **Say clearly who they are looking for ("just apply")**
- **Tell you how they admit**
- **Share institutional needs**
- **Discuss the societal implications of their work**
- **Don't know much about the lives of teenagers and their families due to insularity**



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**Successful admissions really is  
about the 'FIT'.  
This is often confused with  
'STRATEGY'.**

# What Is Strategy?

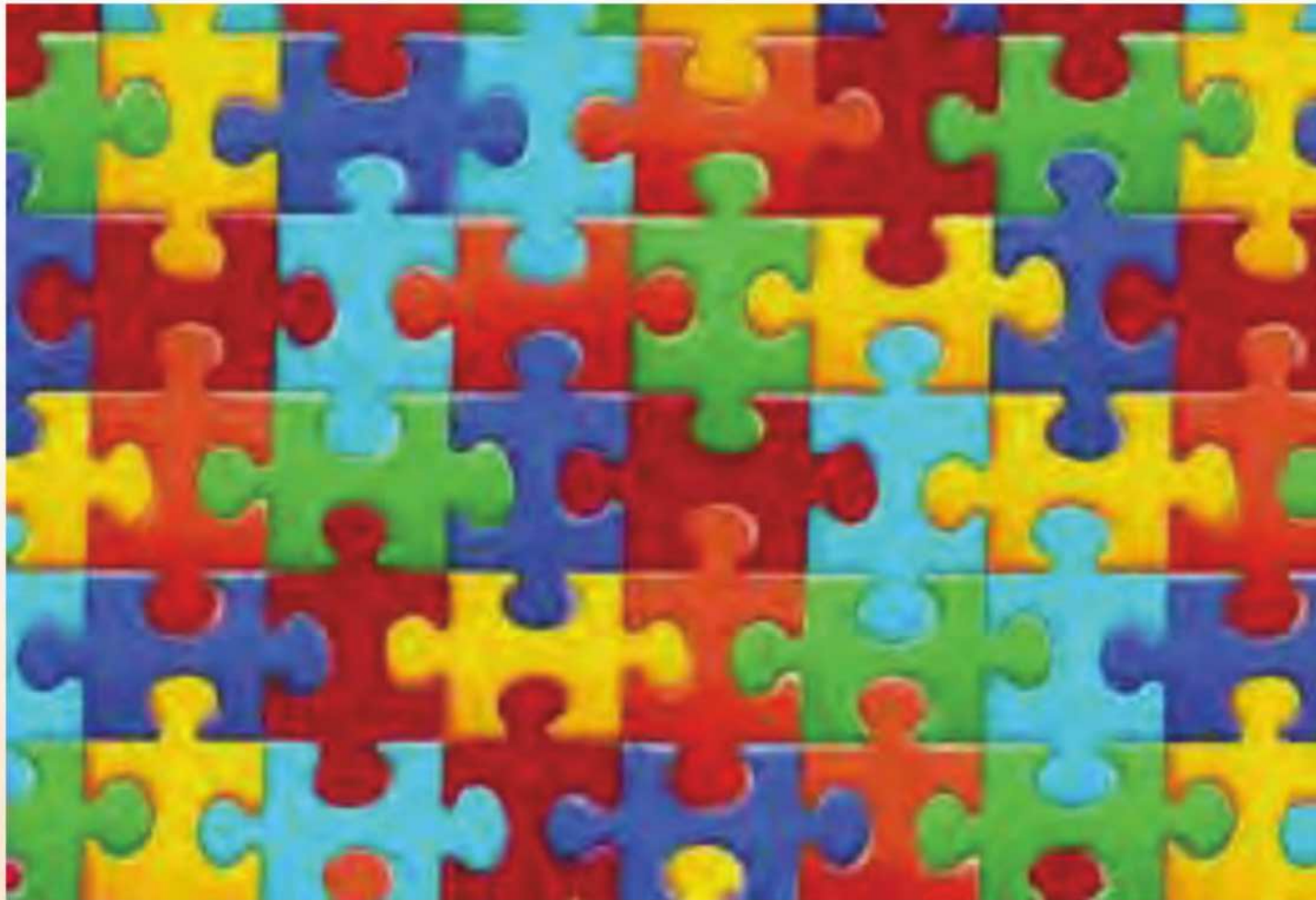


# Strategy...

- Thinking it's a game to be mastered, guessing the "formula"
- Obsessing about the "formula": the family project
- Trying to force the child to be whom others expect them to be
- Pulling out all stops (calling in the chips)
- Early Decision misuse



# What Is 'Fit'?







# What Is Fit?

- **Scores and grades fit the college's culture**
- **Learning and teaching styles are complimentary**
- **College brings out the best in the student**
- **College is happy to enroll the student**
- **Student is happy and engaged**

# Key Concepts to Share With Clients for Savvy Admissions

- Just because they sent lots of shiny stuff to you, doesn't mean they want to admit you. They just want an application.
- Guard your privacy – Don't pour your heart out.
- Don't 'friend' admissions officers. Grandma's rule.
- Look to identify the culture of the school and decide if it fits you. Ask. Evaluate the web site for why the school was founded.
- Don't just answer the essay questions. Each has an agenda.

## More Key Concepts To Share

- **You'll never figure out what the school needs to do for itself (institutional needs), so don't try.**
- **Take nothing personally.**
- **It's an initiation into your adulthood. All is well. Rejection is God's protection.**

**Tips from an Admissions Officer...**  
**Every application is a student's**  
**'story' that helps determine the**  
**match with the college's culture.**

**Tips from an admissions officer...**

**The key to successful admission is understanding a college's mission and culture and, if a match, writing the application through that filter.**





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**Key questions for us all to ask:**

**What's the purpose of education?**

**What's the purpose of Higher  
Education?**



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# Let's redefine success...



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**To laugh often and love much;  
To win the respect of other people  
And the affection of children;  
To earn the approbation of honest  
critics  
And endure the betrayal of false friends;  
To appreciate beauty;  
To find the best in others;  
To give of one's self;  
To leave the world a little better  
Whether by a healthy child,  
A garden patch,  
Or a redeemed social condition;  
To have played and laughed with  
enthusiasm  
And sung with exultation;  
To know that even one life has breathed  
easier  
Because you have lived.  
This is to have succeeded.**



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**What can we IECA members do to  
move the conversation along?**



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